

## State ups incentive for home energy efficiency rebate program

By Eric Bradley Staff Writer

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A state program that offers rebates for home improvements that increase energy efficiency is boosting its financial incentive.

Through Labor Day, Energy Upgrade California is giving up to \$6,000 to homeowners who undertake certain projects that reduce water and electricity use.

Los Angeles County officials said the stimulus was augmented from a previous maximum of \$4,500 after a slow start to the program, which launched in March.

The money available to the county for Energy Upgrade California is approximately \$73 million, about half state and federal dollars and half from utility bill surcharges.

The county's Office of Sustainability is administering the local effort along with Southern California Edison Co. and Southern California Gas Co. The utilities contribute up to \$4,000 toward each rebate.

Melinda Barrett, a spokeswoman with the Office of Sustainability, said the program should be a no-brainer for anyone looking to upgrade their home in an energy-conscious way.

"Say you needed a new air conditioner or you want new windows," Barrett said.

"This enables you to do a whole series of things that make your house more energy efficient,

reduce your costs by half and decrease your energy bills going forward."

Improvements that qualify for rebates include new insulation, installing energy-efficient windows, sealing air leaks, upgrading heating and cooling systems and other "fixed" upgrades.

The

program emphasizes a "whole house" approach to shoring up energy leaks, and ties dollars returned to various packages of improvements that save specific percentages of energy.

Homeowners can participate in the program by first entering their ZIP code at [www.EnergyUpdateCA.org](http://www.EnergyUpdateCA.org), which will reveal a list of contractors who have been trained to work on energy-efficient projects.

The contractors are also integral to another of the program's goals.

"It's putting them back to work as well as making homes more energy efficient," said Marilyn Lyon, a program manager with the South Bay Environmental Services Center, which is serving as the call center for the program in Los Angeles County.

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State officials estimate about 2,000 jobs will be created locally as residents take advantage of the upgrade incentives.

Additionally, it is predicted that approximately 20,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide will be removed from the atmosphere.

The increased summer rebate is retroactive for homeowners who have already started improvements through Energy Upgrade California.

After Labor Day, the county's contribution will return to its original amount, making homeowners eligible for a total of \$4,500 in incentives.

Besides using the program's website, residents can participate by visiting the SBESC's Lawndale office at 15901 Hawthorne Blvd., Suite 400, or by calling the organization at 310-371-7222.

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